

# Workforce Relief Update

Education & the Workforce Committee • John Boehner, Chairman • October 17, 2001

## Labor Secretary Urges Congress to Pass “Back to Work” Plan

In testimony before the House Education & the Workforce Committee, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao yesterday urged Congress to move quickly to enact President Bush’s “Back to Work” plan to strengthen the safety net for displaced workers and their families.

“This Administration is committed to going even further than current programs allow to help families, industries and regions that have been hardest-hit by the terrorist attacks and their aftermath,” Secretary Chao told members of the committee. “Workers need help regardless of what industry they work in -- not just a chosen few. The President’s plan gets money to wherever people are hurting.”

Chao emphasized that the President’s proposal is one that can be implemented quickly, flexibly, and without creating new bureaucracy.

“That is the strength of the President’s proposal: rather than creating new programs that may take years to get up-and-running, we take the current structure and turbo-charge it for the crisis we face right now,” Chao said. “Workers need help now, not down the road. The President’s plan achieves that by creatively expanding current programs, instead of starting from scratch.”

“Most important of all, our workers need to get *back to work* - not just lost in a bureaucracy of dead-end social services,” Chao said. “That’s why the President focuses not only on workers who are currently laid off, but also on the economy that will hire them back.”

### Message of the Day

**The President’s Back to Work plan is a compassionate one -- not just because it provides the flexibility and resources to help workers in need -- but because it recognizes that a displaced worker’s true goal, ultimately, is to return to work.**

- ❑ *The Bush plan utilizes existing programs designed to help workers.*
- ❑ *It can be implemented quickly.*
- ❑ *The proposal doesn’t create a whole new bureaucracy.*
- ❑ *It provides flexibility to meet specific challenges at the state level.*

### DAILY FACTS

- The Bush plan temporarily expands the National Emergency Grant program and authorizes \$3 billion to help workers during this recovery period. This emergency expansion will be maintained for 18 months.
- Grants may be used to (1) pay up to 75 percent of health care premiums covered by COBRA for up to 10 months for laid off or dislocated workers, (2) provide additional weeks of income support for those who have used up their unemployment; and (3) provide additional dollars for job search and training services.
- While some are proposing a much more expansive remedy, the President advocates an approach that can be implemented quickly without creating a new bureaucracy.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

*“I urge the Congress as they plan ways to deal with this tragedy to look at the government programs that already exist. We don’t have time to try to invent new programs. What we ought to do is make those programs that exist work better.” -- President George W. Bush, October 4, 2001*